



WISEWOMAN

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**Success Story 3** More North Carolina Women Have Access to Care, Thanks to WISEWOMAN Partnership

*Partners Reach Out to Working, Underserved Women*

**Location** Cabarrus Health Alliance in Kannapolis, North Carolina

**Focus** Reach underserved, working women who otherwise would not have access to preventive care.

**Strategy** Community partners collaborated to provide screenings for heart disease and cancer, health education, and medications to underserved, working women during hours convenient for them.

**Levels of Success** Many positive community benefits have occurred because of this partnership. More underserved, working women now have access to preventive care, and many health care providers have provided support for WISEWOMAN services.

Organizational benefits also have resulted. Because the partners are referring women to each other, demand for these potentially life-saving services has increased. More importantly, the organizations are providing health care to underserved women who previously were hard to reach.

**Results** WISEWOMAN funds allow underserved and minority women who already receive breast and cervical cancer screenings to also be screened for heart disease, to receive education, and to get free medications as needed. Through the WISEWOMAN project, the Cabarrus Health Alliance was able to provide vital preventive services to about 400 women in 3 years.

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# More North Carolina Women Have Access to Care, Thanks to WISEWOMAN Partnership

*Partners Reach Out to Working, Underserved Women*

In Kannapolis and Concord, working women who are struggling to make ends meet now have access to potentially life-saving health services at a diverse number of clinics that have hours convenient for them. A county health department nurse brought together WISEWOMAN and other partners so they could offer these women screenings for heart disease and cancer, free medications, and health advice about healthy eating, fitness, and other ways to improve health.

Priscilla J. Wilson, RN, came up with the idea and made it happen. She works with the Cabarrus Health Alliance (the county health department), in both the WISEWOMAN Program and the North Carolina Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (NCBCCCP). She also has volunteered at the Community Free Clinic, a facility in Concord that has a small paid staff but is supported by grants, donations, and volunteer health professionals. She wondered what would happen if the clinic, the WISEWOMAN program, and NCBCCCP teamed up to provide hard working, underserved women with direly needed health services. When Priscilla shared her ideas with the health department's administrative staff and the clinic director, everyone was enthusiastic about this new opportunity to help underserved, working women.

The Cabarrus Health Alliance now provides WISEWOMAN services in their Kannapolis location and collaborates with partners to provide these services at other locations during hours that are convenient for working women. For example, the Community Free Clinic in Concord provides space for a clinic once each month and offers follow-up services to women who have abnormal test results. A team of family nurse practitioners, nurses, a health educator, a lab technician, and a receptionist help run the clinic.

Other partners providing services are the NorthEast Medical Center and its Mobile Mammography Unit as well as Ask First, a community health line that refers women to supportive services in the community. Free medications for

high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and other serious conditions also are available through the Community Free Clinic's partnership with pharmacy programs.

The Community Free Clinic also refers eligible women to the county's WISEWOMAN Program and NCBCCCP so they can receive heart disease screening and education as well as breast and cervical exams and mammograms. As a

result, participation in both county programs has consistently increased, with a 64% increase in the number of women served by WISEWOMAN. Over the past 3 years, about 400 underserved and minority women in these locations have received WISEWOMAN services. This is the first time many of these have received such services. Having a referral system in place and offering WISEWOMAN services to all eligible NCBCCCP participants were key factors for getting new women enrolled.

## Importance of Success

This partnership allows women with breast cancer, cervical cancer, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol levels to get much-needed care, education, and medications that they might not otherwise receive. This experience is a model of how partners can work together to reach more women in need.

## Lessons Learned

- Get to know your community resources and health care providers. If you see an opportunity for creative problem-solving, present your ideas with enthusiasm.
- Develop your program one step at a time. Once each step is finished, move on to the next step until you are ready to begin the program.
- Many clients do not fully understand the WISEWOMAN Program, so take the time to explain the program and all of its services. For example, let clients know up front how long they should plan for their clinic visit. Some visits may take longer than others.
- Find an innovative way—through incentives or other methods—to encourage patients to keep appointments.



*“Women screened at the county health department used to be referred to private providers, but they had no access to medications. Now, with a partnership at the Community Free Clinic, eligible women can get the medications they need for free.”*

— Priscilla Wilson, RN,  
WISEWOMAN Service Coordinator